FACULTY
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Charles University

Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Fabian Mayer

Title: When the chips are down: Linking military autonomy and regime survival

Programme/year: MISS/2017

Author of Evaluation (reviewer): Michal Parízek

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	**10**	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	**30**	29
	Methodology, analysis, argument	**40**	35
Total		***80***	74
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	**10**	10
	Style	**5**	5
	Formal requirements	**5**	5
Total		***20***	
TOTAL		***100***	94

Evaluation

Major criteria:

This is a very interesting and extremely carefully written thesis. Fabian Mayer seeks to investigate quantitatively the link between the loyalty of military to regime (DV) and a range of factors pertaining to the autonomy of military – institutional as well as personal. He presents a very comprehensive literature review and theoretical framework, as well as a careful statistical analysis. He finds (perhaps unfortunately) that none of his hypotheses is supported with empirical data.

Let me address several points. First, literature. To the extent to which I can judge (not myself doing research in this specific field), the overview is sound. given the rationalist background of the research, though, I would have expected the author also to work with the very prominent works by Bueno de Mesquita et al (Logic of Political Survival) and especially Acemoglu and Robinson (Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy).

Second, operationalization. From the very start, I was curious on how the author is going to get the data on the factors he identifies as relevant. I have to say the text convinces me that this was done as well as it could be. Of course, data availability, but also reliability, is a major issue here. The author addresses this issue openly and extensively. I really appreciate the work put into this and the authors' transparency about the process (including detailed codebook in the appendix).

Third, analysis. I am not completely convinced by the analytical results. First, I wonder whether the choice of the modelling technique - linear probability model – is really best. I am simply not familiar with the technique and do not recall seeing it used. I think logit would have maybe made more sense, in spite of the higher demands on N. Well, the author explains the lack of significant results repeatedly by pointing to low N, so this problem is anyway daunting the analysis. So why not use the standard technique? This is more a question than a direct criticism, though. Nevertheless, given the low N, I think less could have been more. Why not have a series of models with one IV, find out first which show a sig relationship, and then perhaps have a couple of models with only two or three core variables? I mean, things are mutually quite highly correlated in the overall models, so it would be almost weird if something turned systematically significant. In fact, I suspect the sig negative sign of ascriptive recruitment could be due to correlation with regime ties. So why not do bivariate models and then

maybe a couple of restricted models, with more careful inclusion of IVs? Of course, this would be a second best solution. But given the absence of positive results this would be worth trying, somewhat lowering the type II error probability.

Finally, the author is quite critical of the literature and of the lack of quantitative studies on this topic. Maybe his own analysis explains this gap quite well.

Let me make one thing clear. These are points that I raise to provide feedback to the author, but they should not be read as major points of criticism. This is a very strong thesis, with robust theorizing, work with existing research, huge data collection, and meaningful analysis (my comments above notwithstanding).

Minor criteria:

The thesis is very well and clearly written, it is a real pleasure to read.

The amount of work put into the text and presentation (including maps etc) is enormous, and I appreciate this drive on the quality of the output and its presentation (and not 'only' on content).

Overall evaluation:

This is a very strong thesis which has some parameters of a full-fledged scholarly research. The only 'weakness' is built already into the design, due to the low number of cases (N=44). With this limitation, it becomes a priori unlikely for the author to obtain any positive results. This notwithstanding, I regard this as a very high quality thesis, essentially in all regards.

Suggested grade: excellent (1)

Signature: